this is the only scheme which provides some measure of relief in, at least, some of the cases where farmers are affected by flood or other calamities of crop failure. As I said, the Ministry of Agriculture is engaged in a thorough re-examination of the question of crop insurance. As and when they come up with a better proposal, the Government will consider that proposal.

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Sir, recently, the Ministry of Agriculture has conducted a study on the farmers' suicides through an organisation called MANAGE. They have submitted a report to the Ministry wherein they have mentioned about crop insrance and its implications and complications. In view of its Report, will the Government consider bearing of the premium of small and medium farmers and further simplify the National Agriculture Insurance Scheme?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, I cannot recall having seen that Report. I will pass on the supplementary to my colleague in the Ministry of Agriculture.

*86 [The questioners (PROF. R.B.S. VERMA and SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL) were absent. For answer *vide* page 34.]

Non-allotment of new LPG connections

*87. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR:†
SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is acute shortage of LPG cylinders in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that undertakings like Indian Oil and Hindustan Petroleum have directed its LPG dealers to stop allotting new LPG connections; and

(d) if so, what steps have been taken by Government?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the house by Shri Tariq Anwar.

Statement

(a) to (d) Demand for LPG in the country is met by a combination of domestic production and imports. A temporary shortage of LPG emerged in September 2005 when Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), the single largest domestic supplier of LPG, announced a shut down of their Fluidized Catalytic Cracker (FCC) unit at Jamnagar for maintenance work with effect from October 2005, at just about the time goal LPG supplies became tight, domestic production was affected by the fire at Mumbai High and partly on account of the impact of Hurricane Katrina on US refineries. This upset the plans made by our Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to effect imports in time to offset the anticipated shortage in supplies on account of the RIL shut down.

Further rumours in the market that OMCs would not be able to meet the demand led to a sudden spurt in demand. There were also a strike in bottling plants in the National Capital Territory (NCT) area towards the end of September 2005 which aggravated the situation. The Ministry took matters in hand early in October, 2005 when it was decided that through a combination of inventory management and imports, directly handled by a composite task force of the OMCs under the close supervision of the Government, physical shortage of supply would be overcome as quickly as possible. It was also decided that bottling plants in the NCT area would work on Sunday, 9th October 2005 and other holidays. On the basis of these decisions, it was announced that they physical shortage in the NCT area would end by Dusshera and substantively in the rest of the country by Deepavali. These objectives have been largely achieved. In addition to the arrangements made earlier by OMCs to import 642 Thousand Metric Tonnes (TMT) of LPG during the period October-December 2005, arrangements have been made to import an additional quantity of 237.9 TMT during this period, 116 TMT of which has already reached the country. Thus, the overall physical shortage in the country at present has been reduced to only about 1.5% of the average monthly consumption of LPG. However, the backlog at the micro-level may very from market to market on account of operational reasons. The situation is expected to normalize further by the end of November, 2005 on the restoration of production in RIL's refinery. Moreover, while OMCs are striving to ensure supplies to distributors in accordance with the registered customer strength of the distributor, the active cooperation of State Governments is required to cap, reduce and eventually eliminate

the diversion of domestic LPG to the black market and unauthorized use which takes place on account of the wide gap between the retail price of LPG for domestic use and the market price for commercial LPG. The Union Government in the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas has alerted State Governments to the imperative need to curtail diversion and other malpractices by enforcing the control orders issued under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. OMCs have also been directed to ensure adherence to Marketing Discipline Guidelines, 2001.

In view of the temporary LPG shortage, OMCs had restricted the release of new connections effective September 2005 but, in view of the improvement in the situation, they have accepted the Ministry's request to resume the release of new connections from 1st December, 2005.

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, before the hon. Member puts his supplementary, may I enquire, in the light of the statement that you made a little while ago that we are going to have a full-fledged discussion on kerosene and LPG, whether we are going to take the supplementaries now or we will have the entire and detailed discussion later. Anyway, I will be happy to answer supplementaries. But I was just asking for your instructions.

श्री सभापति: क्या अभी क्वेश्चन पूछना चाहते हैं?

श्री तारिक अनवर: सर, अगर उसको ले रहे हैं तो मुझे कोई हर्ज़ नहीं है।

श्री सभापति: उसे ला रहे हैं। फिर अभी प्रश्न नहीं पूछेंगे।

बाढ़ नियंत्रण योजना

*88. **श्री उदय प्रताप सिंह:** क्या **जल संसाधन मंत्री** यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार द्वारा मानूसन के दौरान बाढ़ प्रभावित क्षेत्रों में बाढ़ नियंत्रण की कोई व्यापक योजना बनाई गई है; और

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है?

जल संसाधन मंत्रालय के राज्य मंत्री (श्री संतोष मोहन देव): (क) और (ख) विवरण सभा पटल पर रख दिया गया है।